

## *General District Court*

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### **Fairfax County General District Court**

#### **► Agency Mission**

To administer justice in matters before the Court by ensuring that all individuals have timely hearings at all stages of Court proceedings and that indigent defendants have access to legal counsel.

#### **► Trends/Issues**

##### **CAPS: Operational Support for General District Court**

The General District Court's (GDC) Traffic and Criminal divisions have undergone a changeover this year from the County's DBMS mainframe to the State's Caseload Management System. In the future, this will require far less technical support from the County. The number of new cases filed with the court continues to grow. Although Civil/Small Claims has experienced a slight decrease, Criminal and Traffic caseloads increase over the years. The new Traffic caseload has grown from 187,394 in 1998 to 217,532 in 2001 and new Criminal cases increased from 26,402 in 1998 to 28,336 in 2001. The General District Court makes an extended effort to adapt to an ever-increasing non-English speaking population. Many forms and instructions are printed in several languages and arrangements are made for interpreters to be in court on a daily basis.

##### **CAPS: Pretrial Services**

The Pretrial Services Unit provides around the clock services consisting of the screening and investigation of incarcerated defendants and making bond recommendations to the magistrates and judges. Criminal record specialists provide complete criminal history records to the magistrate on duty to aid in making an informed decision about a defendant's bond status. Evaluators are responsible for interviewing defendants shortly after their arrests in the jail to determine eligibility for release. Evaluators interview defendants, review criminal history records, and verify information collected with friends, employers, or other parties. If the defendant is not released and fails to make bond, the arraignment evaluator presents recommendations to a judge at the 8:30 a.m. Arraignment Hearing (weekdays only). Defendants are also interviewed for eligibility for court appointed counsel and, if eligible, are assigned counsel. Non-English speaking and hearing impaired defendants are assigned court interpreters for attorney/client interviews and court hearings.

##### **CAPS: Community Supervision Services**

Probation Officers provide pretrial and post-trial community supervision services, which gives the judicial system bond and sentencing alternatives for misdemeanor and felony defendants/offenders. Community supervision helps to relieve jail overcrowding by making jail beds available for more serious offenders while the protection of the community is provided through close monitoring and supervision. Offenders placed on community supervision by the court may have all or part of any sentence imposed by the court suspended conditioned upon the successful completion of probation. Community supervision also enables Fairfax County to better utilize programs and services specifically designed to meet the rehabilitative needs of selected offenders.

In addition to the seventeen County merit positions, there are five limited term positions that provide coverage for the Pretrial Services Unit when regular staff is not available. The Division has developed support for the agency through a volunteer program, which averages 25 part-time citizen volunteers and two to four student interns. Through the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the agency has nine full-time grant positions that provide

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pretrial and community supervision services. As a recipient of grant funds, the agency is mandated to use the State's automated court services' case management system that does not interface with the Division's other automated systems thus requiring double to triple data entry. The State's automated system does not provide statistical information needed for County reports. Each year legislation is passed or amended that has a direct impact on daily operations of the Court Services Division.

### **Key Accomplishments**

- The acceptance rate of program recommendations by judicial officers at the arraignment hearing remains high at 97 percent.
- Based on investigation information presented at arraignment, 684 defendants were released at the arraignment hearing, achieving 102 percent of target objective.
- Investigation information was presented on 2,613 defendants at bond motion hearings in GDC and Circuit Court.
- Five clerical record specialist positions were added to provide mandated criminal history records on arrestees.
- Increase in probationers meeting their financial obligations to the Court.
- Increase in number of placements for community supervision.
- More in-depth and structured substance abuse screening and assessment.

### **Key Challenges**

- Staff retention of entry-level positions.
- Hiring and retaining professional staff that are bilingual.
- Increasing the number of defendants that are released at the initial bail hearing rather than at the arraignment hearing.
- Availability of affordable treatment services for special needs defendants/offenders.

### **FY 2002 Initiatives**

- Increase community outreach to broaden awareness of the Court Services Division and its services.
- Increase the recruitment and duties of volunteers to provide a wider range of services to the agency.
- Implement the full use of substance abuse screening and assessment instruments to improve identification of problem users.
- Automate the assignment and billing process for court interpretation services.
- Reorganize the Division to improve efficiency and to create in-house promotional opportunities to improve retention.
- Create and implement a diversion program for defendants charged with driving on suspended licenses.

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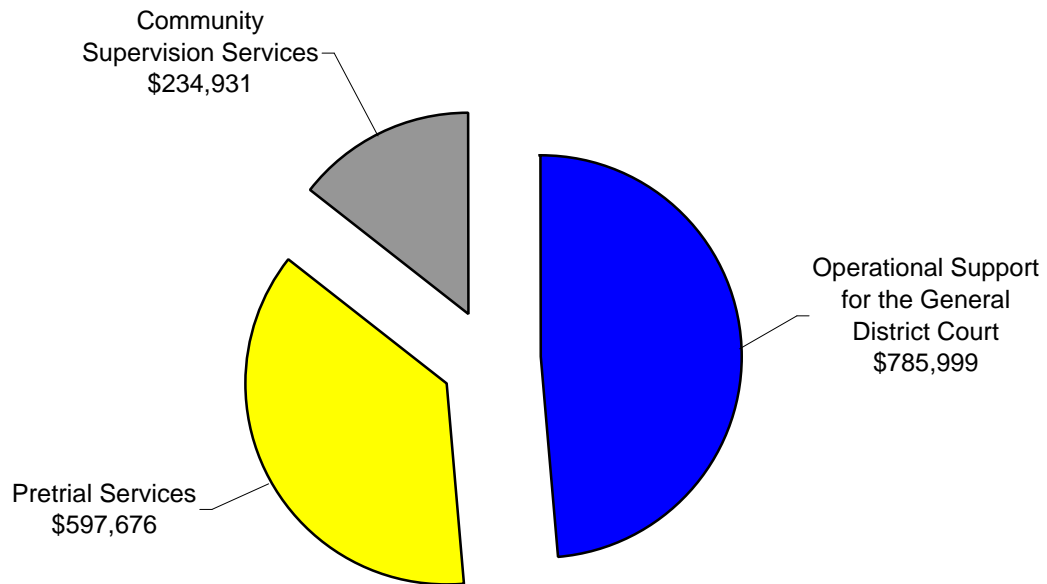
### ► Summary of All Agency CAPS

CAPS Number	CAPS Title	CAPS Net Cost	CAPS Number of Positions/SYE
85-01	Operational Support for the General District Court	(\$5,796,800)	3/3
85-02	Pretrial Services	\$597,676	12/12.5
85-03	Community Supervision Services	\$234,931	5/4.5
<b>TOTAL Agency</b>		<b>(\$4,964,193)</b>	<b>20/20</b>

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Total FY 2002 Adopted Budget Expenditures = \$1,618,606

Total FY 2002 Adopted Budget Net Cost = (\$4,964,193)